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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HO CHI MINH CITY 000359

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 5/12/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CMGT](#) [VM](#)

SUBJECT: SECURITY POLICE ACCUSE CONSULATE OF FOMENTING DISSENT AND
SUPPORTING PROTESTORS

REF: A. A) HCMC 330 AND PREVIOUS - PROTESTORS AT CONGEN HCMC

[1](#)B. B) HCMC 339 - OPTIMISM IN HCMC

[1](#)C. C) 2008 HCMC 333 - GVN LIVID OVER STOP AT NUNS' DEMO

[1](#)D. D) 2008 HCMC 686 - TIEN GIANG MPS PROTEST FRAUD UNIT TRIP

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CLASSIFIED BY: Kenneth J. Fairfax, Consul General, U.S.
Consulate General Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, Department of
State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: At the insistence of "security agencies," the External Relations Office (ERO) of Ho Chi Minh City called in CG on May 11 to complain that Consulate staff have been encouraging anti-GVN protestors and promising land rights protestors political support, visas and other benefits if they would come to HCMC to protest in front of the U.S. Consulate General. CG rebutted these obviously spurious charges while maintaining the Consulate's right to speak with all segments of Vietnamese society. The only specific details ERO would offer were that charges had been made by security officials in Tien Giang, the same province that last year submitted wildly inaccurate complaints about a routine trip by the Consulate's Fraud Prevention Unit (FPU). While the reason for this latest attack is not clear, one likely explanation is an attempt by conservative elements within the MPS to sabotage plans to expand the consular district for ConGen HCMC that is officially recognized by the GVN -- see Comment, below. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) On Monday, May 11, ERO Deputy Director Nguyen Vu Tu summoned CG to present a "strong complaint" that Consulate General staff should not meet with persons who oppose the GVN or who object to GVN specific policies, particularly land rights issues. He explained that Ministry of Public Security (MPS) had complained to ERO that Consulate personnel had been "meeting surreptitiously" with land rights advocates in Tien Giang and elsewhere, as well as inviting them to the Consulate General for clandestine meetings. During these alleged meetings, MPS state that Consulate staff promise protestors material and political support if they came to Ho Chi Minh City to protest. According to MPS complaints, police have "multiple" statements from the land rights protestors who have been congregating in front of the U.S. Consulate (ref A) indicating that the protestors are there at the invitation of the U.S. Consulate and with the understanding that the U.S. Government will support them. Authorities state that the fact that the land rights protestors have been adding human rights slogans to their normal demands for just compensation "proves" the Consulate's involvement, as does the fact that protestors only congregate in front of the U.S. Consulate and not in front of the French, Australian or other Consulates. Tu explained that it has "been difficult" for the police to respond to Consulate requests to relocate the

protestors to a safe location across the street where they will not pose a hindrance to visa applicants or other persons coming to the Consulate (ref A).

13. (SBU) CG vigorously rejected charges that personnel from the Consulate General had, in any way, encouraged or promised support to the protestors. CG also pointed out that every Consulate trip outside of HCMC had been fully vetted with ERO, and therefore MPS, leaving no possibility that Consulate General staff have been meeting with unnamed protestors clandestinely. While rebutting spurious charges that the Consulate is organizing or supporting the protestors, CG equally strongly reasserted the Consulate's right to speak with citizens from all walks of life.

14. (SBU) When Tu specifically raised MPS concern that the Ambassador's recent meeting with prominent dissidents Nguyen Dan Que and Do Nam Hai (ref B) are "unnecessary irritants impeding forward progress in bilateral relations," CG once again pushed back, citing the Ambassador's--and the Consulate's--right to meet with citizens and well as the fact that the Ambassador had specifically discussed the meetings, in writing, with Deputy MPS Minister Huong prior to traveling to HCMC. Tu next raised the year-old incident during which a Consulate staff member stopped to speak with a group of Catholic nuns who were protesting, citing a video tape that the MPS made of the officer as "proof" that the Consulate was encouraging the protestors (ref C). CG once again rebutted those arguments. Tu summed up by stating that any meeting with anyone who opposes the GVN or just specific GVN policies raises "grave concerns" within the MPS, who ask the ERO why is it that only the Americans hold such meetings and not the French, Australians or other Consulates. The CG responded that it is our policy to remain open to meeting with all segments of Vietnamese society as we work to build understanding. In undertaking these meetings, we never encourage anti-GVN activities.

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15. (SBU) As CG was heading to the door, Tu stated that "he could not rule out" that there would be negative repercussions for programs planned this week, an oblique reference to the series of concerts and other public events that the Consulate has arranged for the visiting State Department sponsored good will musical group, Ozomatli.

16. (C) Comment: It is difficult to discern the real motivation behind the spurious charges being leveled by the MPS. The most likely cause is that strongly reactionary elements of the MPS in some Mekong Delta provinces are continuing to oppose progress toward expanding the GVN's definition of ConGen HCMC's consular district. A similar set of spurious charges were made by MPS officials in Tien Giang province last July, precisely when we were insisting that the GVN fulfill its decade-old promise to recognize a larger consular district for ConGen HCMC before we would agree to the opening of new consulates (ref D). In what may well be a related development, the leading local daily newspaper printed a wildly inaccurate and inflammatory account of the Ambassador's recent meeting with dissident Do Nam Hai. Consulate contacts at the paper quietly informed us that the MPS authored the article and order the newspaper to publish it.

17. (U) This cable was coordinated with Embassy Hanoi.
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